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Title: Biden Says Going to Act Fast on COVID Relief Bill Despite GOP Pushback; Congress Passes Key Step and Paves Way for Democrats to Pass Relief Bill; Trump Rejects Request to Testify at Senate Trial; CNN Goes Inside QAnon Gathering. Aired 3:30-4p ET

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Headline: Biden Says Going to Act Fast on COVID Relief Bill Despite GOP Pushback; Congress Passes Key Step and Paves Way for Democrats to Pass Relief Bill; Trump Rejects Request to Testify at Senate Trial; CNN Goes Inside QAnon Gathering. Aired 3:30-4p ET

Guests: Larry Tribe

Highlight: Biden says not cutting the size of the checks. Donnie O'Sullivan, Inside look at a QAnon gathering before the election.

[15:30:00]

BROOKE BALDWIN, CNN HOST: Nothing or not enough. That's how President Biden is characterizing Republicans' efforts when it comes to bringing pandemic relief to Americans all across the country.

His scathing remarks come on the heels of pushing through a sweeping \$1.9 trillion relief package and signaled he is ready to move forward without bipartisan support.

With me now CNN chief White House correspondent Kaitlan Collins and CNN chief congressional correspondent Manu Raju.

Kaitlan, first with you, you know, both -- there were critics on both sides of the aisle who were saying that the president can lower the cost. How is President Biden defending the price tag?

KAITLAN COLLINS, CNN CHIEF WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT: Well, he is citing that jobs reports that came out today, talking about only 49,000 jobs being added to the economy last month, 6,000 of those in the private sector. Saying that not only does this bill need to stay at same level that it is right now, but it needs to get passed really quickly. And you're seeing Democrats start to move to make that happen.

And so Biden talked today probably in the clearest terms that we've heard him say yet since these talks have started since he's invited Republicans here to the White House, and Democrats, of course, as well saying that he is moving forward with or without Republican support.

And he was saying he's not going to get drawn into these long negotiations that could go on for weeks without, you know, any real promise, that it would finally attract Republican support in the end, and he said that was an easy choice for him to make.

And so, Brooke while he did say he was willing to compromise on some things, like targeting those stimulus checks. That's been a criticism not just from Republicans but also from some moderate Democrats. He said that he is not willing to budge on one thing when it comes to those checks.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE BIDEN, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: The American rescue plan is going to keep the commitment of \$2,000 -- \$600 has already gone out. \$1,400 checks to people who need it. This is money directly in people's pockets. They need it.

We need to target that money so folks making \$300,000 don't get any windfall and here's what I won't do. I'm not cutting the size of the checks. They are going to be \$1,400, period.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

COLLINS: So Brooke, they are going to be \$1,400 but what we don't know is who is getting them and when they will start phasing out for certain people. That is something that the White House later said at the briefing is still under discussion. It's not something that they have made a decision on, how that's going to phase out. And, of course, that's really important and that's what people are going to be wanting to know over the next few days.



BALDWIN: What about the process over on The Hill, Manu? Now we know both chambers of Congress have passed a budget resolution. What does it mean in terms of getting the bill passed?

MANU RAJU, CNN SENIOR CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENT: Well it's a huge step forward. I mean there's a very good chance that they could get their -- get this through certainly the House. The Senate will be the big question mark.

The passage of this budget resolution today by Congress essentially sets the stage for a very critical next couple of weeks, what this process allows them to do in the Senate is to pass the legislation with just Democratic support.

They could avoid a Republican filibuster because under the rules you cannot filibuster this piece of legislation. So that means instead of 60 votes that would ordinarily be needed to advance legislation, here you need just 50 and there are 50 Democratic Senate seats thanks to the two Georgia Democrats who won the January 5th runoffs.

Kamala Harris could break the tie-breaking vote, so they have the numbers to get it through, but they still have to write the legislation.

[15:35:00]

Nancy Pelosi wants to deliver this package from the House to the Senate within the next two weeks, and that could set the stage for a final passage vote by the end of the month.

But, again, Brooke, the details are going to be critical. Can they keep each wing of their party satisfied, the likes of Bernie Sanders, likes of a Joe Manchin who wants things more structured and focused and targeted in some aspects of this bill? Can they keep both wings of their party satisfied? That's going to be the big question.

But one thing is clear. They are going to move without Republican support. Can they get done with just Democratic support, the big question now in the next couple of weeks ahead -- Brooke.

BALDWIN: Manu, thank you. Kaitlan, thank you.

Former President Donald Trump quick to reject the request to testify in a second impeachment trial. Will that hurt his case?

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[15:40:00]

BALDWIN: Former President Donald Trump will not testify at his second impeachment trial which is set to begin next Tuesday. His attorney swiftly rejected the impeachment managers' request for testimony suggesting that it signaled the House could not prove the allegations against the former president. Let's dive into all this.

Larry Tribe is a constitutional law professor at Harvard Law and joins me now. Professor, a pleasure, sir. Welcome.

LARRY TRIBE, CONSTITUTIONAL LAW PROFESSOR, HARVARD LAW: Pleasure to be here, Brooke.

BALDWIN: All right. So, you know, no one expected Trump to say, yes, great, sure, I'll show up and testify. But the impeachment managers say they can actually now use that, use his not coming, not wanting to show up against him. How will they do that?

TRIBE: Well, they will do it the way Justice Scalia suggested some years ago when the late justice said, if I ask my teenage kid, have you watched this forbidden movie? And he kind of looks away and doesn't answer, I know what that means.

In this case there's plenty of common sense and law in support of the proposition that when someone is accused of in this case a really massive, massive attack on the United States of America, insurrection against the Capitol and when we've all seen with our own eyes and heard with our own ears what he said, and he's given the opportunity to explain why it doesn't add up the way it seems to add up and he says, you know, I'm too busy being ex-president or you guys don't have a right to put me on trial, we know what that means.

It's the profound admission of guilt, and that's exactly the way I expect the House managers to use it.

BALDWIN: I wanted to ask you what you thought of his wording, Trump's, you know, rejection letter. What did you think of it, the tone in it? What do you expect then using that as sort of foreshadowing for what's to come next week? What do you think we'll see from team Trump after reading the letter?

TRIBE: Team Trump has not acquitted itself very well. They don't even know how to spell United States. BALDWIN: You are correct.

TRIBE: They opened the door to this inference about, you know, Trump not being courageous enough to testify so I expect the House managers to make the maximum use of it, and I expect the Trump lawyers to trip all over themselves.

It's -- it's a sad sight because we would like to have the best possible presentation of whatever limited defense there can be, but I don't think there is much of a defense except this idea that because he ran out the clock, we can't put him on trial and disqualify him in the future. That would set a terrible dangerous January exception, precedent for the future.

It would mean that presidents at the most vulnerable time of when the country is going through a transition could try to overturn the results of an election they lost, and if that doesn't work, they could use violence and then escape being held to account.

The fact that you can prosecute him criminally after the fact is not enough because the burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt in a criminal prosecution has nothing to do with what we should have to demonstrate in order to protect ourselves from a tyrant who can get a third of the people behind him, many of them armed and dangerous.

BALDWIN: You are correct in how it would be precedent-setting.

TRIBE: Right.

BALDWIN: What about witnesses, Larry? You know, we still don't know yet whether the managers will call any other witnesses to testify. You know, the trial starts Tuesday. What do you think they are waiting for, and do you think that they should call witnesses?

TRIBE: You know, to whatever extent I have any conversations with any of them, and some of them are my former students, I just don't feel free to talk about it. I think they will make their own decision. It will be a decision made in conjunction with Nancy Pelosi, with Chuck Schumer. I don't want to forecast.

But I don't think we need witnesses to something we've all witnessed with our own eyes and heard with our own ears. This is the first real-time insurrection against the United States. What could be clearer? What could be a better reason to say that somebody is an existential danger to the future to our Republic? You don't need expert testimony. You don't need witnesses. We're all witnesses, we've seen it with our own eyes.

BALDWIN: It's right there in front of us and on audio and on video recordings. Professor Tribe there as Harvard, thank you, professor, very much.

TRIBE: Thank you, Brooke.

BALDWIN: Again, the trial starts next Tuesday. As Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene defends her statements on all these conspiracy theories, we will take you inside a gathering of **QAnon** followers before many of them traveled to Washington on January 6th. A CNN exclusive next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[15:45:00]

BALDWIN: Four months leading up to this election, former President Trump fueled lies spread by **QAnon** on Twitter, at his campaign rallies and he refused to denounce the group when directly asked about it.

So now we're getting this incredible inside look at how **QAnon** believers interpreted Trump's comments.

CNN's Donnie O'Sullivan attended this pre-election meeting of **QAnon** followers for this story.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: There's not supposed to be any media present. There's a media blackout.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: One little piece of advice for the mainstream media is not everything can be debunked.

[15:50:00]

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: And maybe it's either going to have to be on the right side of history or their going to go down with the ship.

DONNIE O'SULLIVAN, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice over): You might think wearing a face mask would help a reporter go unnoticed but not at this gathering of QAnon followers in Arizona just two weeks before November's election.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Take off those damn masks and leave them off.

O'SULLIVAN (voice over): That's me and my colleague there, two of the very few people wearing masks at this indoor event in the middle of a pandemic.

And the guy at the back of the room? He's known as the QAnon shaman, and he would go on to storm the Capitol in January.

CROWD SINGING: Where we go one, we go all, I won't push you down--

O'SULLIVAN (voice over): Where we go one, we go all, an infamous QAnon slogan promoted by Trump's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Where we go one, we go all.

O'SULLIVAN (voice over): And played as an anthem at this meeting of Trump supporters. UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We are at war right now. And we in this room understand that very, very much.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Obviously, you heard the president talking about that stuff, haven't you?

CROWD: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: That QAnon thing.

CROWD: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Did he disavow it, anybody?

CROWD: No.

O'SULLIVAN (voice over): Two nights earlier, Trump had praised QAnon followers at a town hall with Savannah Guthrie.

SAVANNAH GUTHRIE, NBC NEWS COHOST: Can you, just once and for all, state that that is completely not true and disavow QAnon in its entirety?

DONALD TRUMP, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: I know nothing about QAnon.

GUTHRIE: I just told you.

TRUMP: You told me. But what you tell me doesn't necessarily make it fact. I hate to say that.

O'SULLIVAN (voice over): The message to the people in this room was clear. Trump was on their side.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: So we have 17 days between now and a massive Trump victory.

O'SULLIVAN (voice over): In the room prominent figures in the QAnon movement, including Jim Watkins, who runs the hate filled site 8chan where QAnon messages are posted and at least two people who would go on to Washington, D.C. on January 6th.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: A lot of the time all it really takes is keeping our eyes and our ears open to see who is on what side.

O'SULLIVAN (voice over): Jacob Chansley, so-called **QAnon** shaman, who is charged for his role in the insurrection and went on a hunger strike in prison because they didn't have organic food.

JACOB CHANSLEY, SO-CALLED **QANON** SHAMAN: We are at war right now.

O'SULLIVAN (voice over): And this man, Alan Hostetter, known for organizing anti-lockdown protests in California.

ALAN HOSTETTER, AMERICAN PHOENIX PROJECT, **QANON** SUPPORTER: Nobody wants violence. And we are conditioned from the time we're children in this country to always think that violence is a horrible, horrible thing.

Until we go back and reflect on our revolutionary war. They picked up guns at some point and said enough. Until we reflect on the civil war. We ended slavery by picking up guns and dealing with it that. And we don't want that to have to happen. It always has to be something in the back of your mind.

O'SULLIVAN (voice over): Hostetter's home was raided by the FBI after the insurrection.

Media was not allowed to officially attend the event, but any member of the public could attend. And I signed up using my name and work email address.

Also in attendance was Travis View, a host of the **QAnon** Anonymous Podcast, who has been tracking this conspiracy theory for years.

TRAVIS VIEW, HOST, **QANON** ANONYMOUS PODCAST: One of my big takeaways from attending the Q conference is that the **QAnon** movement is so much more than just the predictions or the feeling like you're getting inside information. It's about the community.

The people there felt like they were part of something big and revolutionary, and that they were opposing absolute evil. And that made me feel like this is something that's not going to go away just because Trump lost the election.

CROWD: Where we go one, we go all

(END VIDEOTAPE)

O'SULLIVAN (on camera): And Brooke, as we go into this impeachment trial next week, you can see there how important the message from President Trump was, how important it was that Trump was praising the **QAnon** followers, and how important it was that he was not disavowing this movement to a room, by the way, which, of course, had some people in there who would later go on and take part in January sixth's insurrection.

BALDWIN: And that there you were, CNN reporter sitting there, signed up as a CNN reporter and in the room with some of the people like the guy with the -- the shaman, who would end up being such a central figure on January 6th. It is stunning. Please keep digging up these stories and just educating us on who these people are and how they think. Donnie O'Sullivan, thank you so much.

O'SULLIVAN: Thanks, Brooke.

BALDWIN: Breaking news coverage continues this afternoon as Congress passes a key step to allow Democrats to push ahead with President Biden's COVID relief bill with no threat of a GOP filibuster.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[15:55:00] BALDWIN: Super Bowl weekend is upon us. The defending champs, the Kansas City Chiefs, take on the Tampa Bay Buccaneers Sunday. But the game definitely looks quite a bit different this year. The stadium is only allowing 25,000 fans, including thousands of frontline health care workers. Everyone attending will be required to wear a mask. The league saying they're going to be handing out PPE kits and N-95 masks.

And just a reminder to all Americans from health officials, watch the game only with people in your household. No Super Bowl parties say the experts.